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Newfoundland Labrador

Justice
Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs
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Justice Minister to Host Meetings between Aboriginal Groups and Justice Officials

In keeping with his commitment to work with residents of Labrador and improve the administration of justice in that region, the Honourable Jerome Kennedy, Minister of Justice and Attorney General, will host meetings in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Tuesday, January 15.

Attending these meetings will be Aboriginal groups in Labrador and senior officials of the justice system in Newfoundland and Labrador as well as the Honourable John Hickey, Minister of Labrador Affairs, and the Honourable Patty Pottle, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

"During my first visit to Labrador as minister, I heard a number of concerns about the administration of justice, especially from the Aboriginal community, and I committed to returning for further discussions of these matters," said Minister Kennedy. "One of the concerns raised was a lack of understanding about Aboriginal issues. It is my hope that these meetings will help improve this situation for all parties involved."

Accompanying Minister Kennedy to Labrador will be senior officials of the justice system who have responsibility for various areas of justice which have a significant impact upon the Labrador community. Aboriginal leaders and officials will be provided an opportunity for frank discussion on issues of importance for them and to reach a better understanding of the concerns and circumstances unique to Labrador.

"I feel it is important to have those in a leadership role, both within the Department of Justice and our communities, come together and discuss how we can work together to advance the administration of justice," said Minister Kennedy. "Through continued dialogue and cooperation I believe we can improve the experiences of those who must encounter the justice system."

"There are serious judicial issues in Aboriginal communities," said Minister Pottle. "I believe the Provincial Government is facing those issues head-on and I look forward to joining Minister Kennedy, Minister Hickey and the Aboriginal groups to engage in meaningful discussions."

Since his appointment Minister Kennedy has stated that Labrador is his highest priority for justice matters. Through Budget 2007 the Provincial Government has made an investment of $424,000 in the region for the development of interpreting resources and programs that enhance access to justice services in Inuktitut and Innu-aimun for Aboriginal peoples and a commitment of $211,000 for an expansion of the Family Justice Services Division in Labrador. As well, the Department of Justice will hold a conference in Happy Valley–Goose Bay, March 6-7, for employees with a goal of enhancing responsiveness in Aboriginal communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

"The unique cultures that exist in Labrador are complex and our government is very cognizant of that," said Minister Hickey. "I am confident that the discussions taking place while Minister Kennedy and his officials are in Labrador will go a long way to further strengthening the relationship between the Provincial Government and the Aboriginal people of Labrador."

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